

have access to quality legal representation.

The bill also includes \$582 million for the Small Business Administration to help small businesses prosper. Of this, \$100 million is for Small Business Development Centers, or SBDCs, which is the highest ever funding level for this program. These centers provide management assistance to current and prospective small business owners. In addition, they support existing businesses and assist start-ups with high-quality, no-cost counseling and affordable training programs.

This support for our small businesses helps invigorate local economies by helping the very small businesses that are firmly rooted in our communities both succeed and grow. There are now 63 main SBDCs, at least one in every State, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with a network of more than 1,100 service locations.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the underlying bill made in order under this open rule is a well-crafted piece of legislation. I appreciate that the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee worked together to produce such a product. The bill ensures taxpayer fairness, protects the right to vote, and funds programs critical to supporting our Nation's small businesses.

I urge all Members to support this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I express my appreciation to my very good friend from Sacramento, Ms. MATSUI.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to the rule. I know that this is a rule that follows the 200-year tradition that we have had of appropriations bills as privileged resolutions. They have the ability to come to the floor without a rule at all, but if items are protected in the bill, they have to provide waivers from the Rules Committee, and that is what has been followed here. We did this when the Republicans were in the majority and the Democrats are following suit here.

But there are a number of concerns that have come to the forefront. To me, the most important concern, Mr. Speaker, is one that I raised upstairs in the Rules Committee last night.

The Committee on Ways and Means had put into place a very important program in September of 2006 which deals with an issue that is near and dear to every single American who pays taxes. That issue is ensuring that every single American pays their taxes. I don't like paying taxes. But I do it.

Mr. Speaker, I don't like the fact that there are people out there who don't pay their taxes when they are

supposed to do it. The challenge of collecting taxes is a very, very important concern of, as I said, every American who does pay their taxes. Collecting taxes is a very important thing, too. Making sure that people do comply with the law is, I believe, an imperative that we need to do all we can to enforce.

Unfortunately, this appropriations bill that we are bringing forward is one that actually eliminates a program that has been extraordinarily effective. It is a program, Mr. Speaker, that has been utilized now by the Federal Government and by 40 of the 50 States. What does it consist of? Simply contracting with private collection agencies, PCAs, to ensure that people who are deadbeats, who are not paying their taxes, actually pay their taxes.

Mr. Speaker, this issue does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee. I see Mr. RANGEL here and other members of the Ways and Means Committee. Mr. McCRERY sent a letter to us in the Rules Committee saying that he believed that this rule should not allow protection for a point of order to be made against the provision about which I am speaking.

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So, Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly about the need for us to make sure that the Ways and Means Committee can have the jurisdiction, and, frankly, keep in place this collection process. So far, \$19.4 million has been collected from people who have not paid their taxes by these private collection agencies, and the projection is that over the next 10 years in excess of \$1.5 billion will be collected by the Federal Government from these people who have been deadbeats and have not paid their taxes. So I think it is very unfortunate that this bill proceeds with this, and the fact that this rule does not provide us with an opportunity to address that has led me to oppose it.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is going to be an effort to defeat the previous question, and if that is done, our colleague from Nebraska Mr. TERRY is going to offer an amendment to the rule that would make in order a provision that would allow for the rejection of the cost-of-living adjustment.

I know there is a lot of talk around here about that issue, so we are going to be having a vote on that. Our colleague from Nebraska, as I said, Mr. TERRY will in fact be the author of that amendment if we did defeat the previous question on this issue.

Having said that, I do want to say there are a number of items in this bill that I think are very good and important. I am particularly proud of having worked for a number of years on the issue of financial literacy training for students and for adults as well.

We see this proliferation of advertising, Mr. Speaker, that continues to come down from a wide range of enti-

ties, and it can be confusing. Unfortunately, there are many young people today who really don't have the grasp of the financial instruments that are options to them out there. For that reason, I believe that something in this bill that is very good is the effort to focus on the increase of financial literacy training.

Mr. Speaker, I want to praise my colleagues, especially Mr. REGULA, who has taken on this responsibility here as the ranking member of the subcommittee, and Mr. SERRANO, who is chairing the subcommittee. I praise them for working together in a bipartisan way on some other items that are very important.

As I said, I believe that interdicting illicit drugs is a very important issue. This drug trafficking issue was a topic of discussion in the last debate that we had on the Andean Trade Preference Act that we are going to be voting on later this evening, and I believe that there are, again, many, many other items that are included in this bill that are good and decent and appropriate measures.

But I just am very, very concerned about this issue, as I said, Mr. Speaker, of this notion of people abusing the tax provisions and not, in fact, paying their fair share of taxes. So I feel strongly that taking advantage of these private collection agencies is, in fact, the right thing to do. I know there is concern voiced about that, because people don't like being harassed. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? If they are not paying their fair share of taxes, I believe steps should be taken to try and get them to do that. So this is going to lead me to oppose the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my very good friend from Greensboro, North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from California for yielding. We are in disagreement about the proposed COLA.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose the proposed cost-of-living allowance increase because it is ill-timed. I represent constituents, as do many of you, who earn \$25,000 to \$35,000 annually, and they read that the Congress approves a COLA increase for themselves. Not good.

According to recent polls, Americans don't like the Congress. Our numbers, lower than President Bush's numbers, are in the tank. To enact this COLA proposal will do nothing, in my opinion, to improve our already diminished reputation.

Mr. Speaker, my fiscal philosophy is very simple: Taxpayers pay our salaries, and beyond that, in my opinion, they owe us little more. I have refused a congressional pension, so when I leave the Congress I will receive not one brown penny of congressional pension money, because I don't believe taxpayers owe me a congressional pension just because I served in the Congress. By the same reasoning, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe they owe us a